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Justice Department Drops Case Against Alleged Nazi

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Because of a 28-year-old document recently discovered in CIA files, the Justice Department yesterday dropped its suit seeking to deport a Russian-born, alleged abettor of Nazis who now is a naturalized American living in Paterson, N.J.

Allan A. Ryan Jr., director of the Office of Special Investigations at the Justice Department, said "the law and the evidence leave me no choice," but to drop the deportation suit against Tscherim Soobzokov, 62, who was a member of a Waffen SS unit and of the so-called North Caucasian Legion, a group affiliated with the army of Nazi Germany from 1942-1945.

Ryan, whose office is referred to as the Nazi-hunting unit, said that the basis for deporting people such as Soobzokov is their alleged concealment of their Nazi connections from U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service authorities.

Soobzokov, who has denied charges that he was a Nazi, has been serving as the chief purchasing inspector for Passaic County, N.J.

When the suit against Soobzokov was filed in U.S. District Court in Newark, N.J., last Dec. 5, the Justice Department argued that Soobzokov had concealed his affiliations with three Nazi-controlled groups. He also was charged with concealing his earlier confinements in Soviet prisons. The result of the concealments was that Soobzokov was accused of lacking "the good moral character required for naturalization."

Ryan said that before filing the deportation suit, Justice officials had reviewed documents from the INS, FBI, CIA and State Department and were satisfied that Soobzokov had concealed his Nazi affiliations. Ryan also said that the Justice Department is no longer convinced it could make a case about the concealments of the Soviet confinements.

In mid-April, Soobzokov's attorney, Michael F. Dennis, told Justice Department attorneys that Soobzokov had disclosed his Nazi affiliations to State Department officials when applying for a visa to the United States at the American Embassy in Amman, Jordan, on August 19, 1952.

Ryan said that a records check at the CIA produced three documents, including that visa application and a copy of a Aug. 18, 1953, State Department document sent from Amman asking for a security check on Soobzokov. The State Department could not locate those documents or a cover letter that accompanied them.

On his visa document, Soobzokov revealed his connections with the German army groups.

"Some may find it ironic," Ryan said, "that we must terminate this litigation because the defendant admitted his affiliation with organizations loyal to the Third Reich. But that, in my opinion, is the law, ironic or not, as it applies to this case."

Ryan's statement also contained an unusual disclaimer about press reports that Soobzokov may have had "an independent connection to the Central Intelligence Agency." I am aware that such a claim has been made in the public media. My answer to such a question is simply that I am not at liberty to reveal any such connection, if it exists, in this case or any other case.

He explained that the CIA's earlier failure to disclose the document to the Justice Department had occurred because the CIA's documents were originally from the State Department and it is the policy of the CIA not to disclose documents originated from so-called "third party" sources. Ryan said, "I am satisfied that the shortcomings were nothing more than a legitimate misunderstanding."

Ryan added that if further investigations reveal that Soobzokov took part in wartime persecutions, the Justice Department would file a new suit seeking his deportation.